

[in exile, seeing you out](#) by [stardustupinlights](#)

Series: marked me like a blood stain [3]

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Summary:

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Relationships: Diluc/Kaeya (Genshin Impact)

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Author's Note:

enjoy, babies. u can find me on twitter @stardustdreams7 btw, but i legit only lurk uwu

hope u enjoy!

"Fuck you, too."

Kaeya glances up from his paperwork as Diluc closes the door to his office — which used to be *his* office, so the desk still has a scorch mark from when Kaeya fucked him against it and his Vision went a bit out of control. It's certainly nice to see him here, even if it's barely dawn. Good morning, indeed, or it would be if Diluc didn't look ready to commit murder.

"Well, if you insist, there's space on my lap, and my cock wouldn't mind the company," Kaeya pats his lap in demonstration, but Diluc's already angry glare just intensifies. "What did I supposedly do to make you this mad, Master Diluc? It's even earlier than usual for you, is it not? Must be dire."

Diluc glances at the papers over Kaeya's desk and raises an eyebrow at how it's Jean's signature on the pages. Well, now, best to turn them around, in case Diluc is mad enough to tell on him for taking some things off Jean's workload in preparation for Ludi Harpastum. She'd probably find something about it wrong, too, knowing her.

"You know what you did," Diluc says, leaning both his hands on the desk and down, bearing on him. He's trying to intimidate him, but Kaeya's just... turned on, which he probably shouldn't be. The cogs in his brain seem to be slow, due to the hour. "You did *exactly* what we agreed you wouldn't do."

Kaeya's expression becomes sour, as he thinks of the extra pair of footsteps he pretended he didn't hear, last night, when he was taking a walk with Dainsleif, the Bough Keeper, who'd come back after months of nothing for

another round of drink-mixing. He should've known better than to let Diluc go, since now his pride has had enough time to be hurt.

"You know it was necessary."

"You showed him," and Diluc nods at his eye patch. "Like it was nothing."

"It *is* nothing, at least for him. He proved to be as unimpressed with it as I hoped he wouldn't be," Kaeya sighs, sets his pen down, and leans back on his chair. "Diluc, I don't know what to tell you. I ran across Aether, and he told me some rather worrying things about the time they spent together last time he was here. So I needed some inkling of his intentions, and any clue to add to our rather sad pile. Can you blame me?"

Diluc's lips press into a thin line. "You could've waited for me."

Kaeya stares at his eyes and takes a deep breath, processing the words. It's more than Diluc wanting to protect Mondstadt, that much is obvious, or he wouldn't be this mad at *him*. No, Diluc's fury hides, like it often does, the pain of Kaeya's selfish blows.

He didn't promise, exactly, that he wouldn't approach Dainsleif. They just said he was best left alone. And Kaeya would hide under that excuse if he didn't know that he's entirely too used to leaving Diluc in the dark about details, even when it's the opposite of productive to do so, simply because he can't let go of secrets just like that. He's trying to break the habit, for their sake, which is why he told Charles exactly where he was going and with whom before Diluc arrived at Angel's Share.

But this was a matter that required caution, the type of trained assassins instead of Diluc's practiced hand at quiet infiltration and righteous assaults, the kind Kaeya was taught in his homeland once he was let on the surface to fight the very monsters their people had become. In Khaenri'ah, there's only death, if you somehow disturb the peace of the sinners. No flashy Visions to represent an advantage on the field, only the sound of the rain and the wind, the darkness, and a well-held knife.

It also required a shit-ton of Khaenri'ahn, and wine. Diluc probably didn't get a word about what they spoke about last night, which probably only adds to his anger.

"Listen, Luc," Kaeya sighs, standing up to meet his height by leaning on the desk. He's still taller, even slightly bent down, but he'd probably be killed if he called him tiny. "I'm sorry— don't pull that face, I *am*. And you know I was going to tell you anyways, since I left you a tip. But I'm used to working alone, and I didn't want him to know more about you than he already does."

Diluc raises an eyebrow, crossing his arms. "And what is that supposed to mean?"

"He gave me a warning," Kaeya shrugs, but Diluc is already paling. "Told me I should play my role, and when my time to choose came, that wouldn't stop them from taking me. He refused to tell me about how deep his involvement goes, but it's clear it's close enough to be worrying. What Aether told me concerned me far more—"

"Taking you?" Diluc asks, voice strangled. "*Taking you?*"

"I haven't a clue," Kaeya winces. "It doesn't sound nice, though. And the last thing I need is someone deciding that you need to be pruned from the garden of my attachments to Teyvat."

"Don't pretend to protect me," Diluc protests, but his heart doesn't seem to be into it. "I can watch my own back."

"I don't doubt it, Diluc, but I'm used to being the *only* Khaenri'ahn eyes on you. Everyone else, Fatui, or otherwise— they're dangerous, but they don't come from a land of nothingness, even if they *might be* working with it."

They stare at each other, a quiet battle of wills, but Diluc doesn't relent, true to his nature.

"What else, then?" Diluc breathes out, and with it seems to go most of his anger. His shoulders drop, and his eyes are able to properly meet his. He

looks exhausted, and Kaeya wonders if he slept, but there's something guarded in his gaze still. "A warning couldn't have been all. What did Aether say?"

"I'll tell you later," Kaeya glances at the clock on the wall, then at the workload over his desk. He has to get this to Jean before she notices the documents gone. "My shift hasn't even started yet, but I have to catch up on some things."

"Can't you tell me now?"

Kaeya pauses, glancing at Diluc, and notices how tightly clenched his hands are. "What is it? What's bothering you still?"

Diluc thinks about it for too long, a silent fight going on in his head reflected in his eyes, until he finally decides to voice his grievances, the set of his jaw and shoulders letting Kaeya know that he's made a choice, one he won't go back on.

"Are you sure you've told me everything? That you *will*? That nothing has or will conveniently slip your mind?"

Kaeya knows that Diluc won't ever trust him like he used to.

That's just something unattainable, and that he doesn't want anyways, because even he can't trust himself. He said this much to Dainsleif, *such is the nature of a liar*, that his loyalties and morals will never be properly aligned. But the uncertainty in Diluc's eyes, paired with the leftover embers of his angry words at arrival still ringing in his ears, make the questions sound like accusations born out of his paranoia regarding Kaeya's intentions, ones that are too similar to those of four years ago, or even a few months back, before they found it in themselves to finish cleaning up the pieces of each other that were broken by their own hands.

Kaeya is a liar, yes, and he might too often keep details to himself for a while before revealing them, but he hasn't done anything lately to gather this degree of doubt, so loud in the silence between them that it could potentially break glass, if the pitch is left to rise for too long. He won't

stand for this, not after the night of his birthday, not after he started teaching Diluc some basic Khaenri'ahn, not after showing him the diaries. Not after baring himself, time and time again, for the same result.

Kaeya's blood runs cold, already, but now it seems to freeze in his veins as he steels himself. Like so many times before, when it comes to Diluc, it *hurts*, the way the words roll off his tongue, the way he has to make up for the slack, because, clearly, Kaeya is the only one that never forgets that he's willing to die with Diluc's name on his lips, even if he has to take his life himself to guarantee that.

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Watching Diluc's eyes widen further in disbelief and panic, Kaeya feels like he's swallowing acid, but his heart throbs, the scars on it flaring with chronic pain. He needs some time to compose himself, before he says things that he'll regret. Unlike Diluc, Kaeya isn't prone to let his words shoot to kill with the justification of anger. He finds logic is a better weapon.

Diluc seems to realize he's stepped on a mine, pulled the wrong string, because his face softens, his eyes darkening with regret. “Kaeya, I didn't mean—”

“*Diluc*,” Kaeya sighs, breaking eye contact, and grabs his quill off his desk, turning the documents he was signing back around. “Later. I have to get these to Jean.”

“But—”

The door slams against the wall with an ear-shattering *BANG!*, startling both of them, but an excited voice comes with it, keeping them from shifting into hostile stances.

“Sir Kaeya!” Comes Klee’s voice, and he immediately feels himself softening, his lips turning into a grin, everything else fading from his mind. “Master Albedo said he has to go away for a few days, and he told me you could help Klee make gifts for— uh!”

Klee notices Diluc standing before his desk and clams up, a nervous look reaching her eyes. Diluc looks just as awkward; he was never good with children, despite his best attempts.

“M—Master Diluc, sir!” She says, quivering in her boots, the bomb assembling materials she’s holding almost falling off her arms. Kaeya internally winces; wouldn’t that be nice, death by a child bombing his office. “Good morning!”

“Morning,” Diluc mumbles, pressing his lips together as if struggling to decide how to address a child that’s also part of the Ordo Favonius. Kaeya decides to take over, walking over to take some of the flammables out of Klee’s hands and settling them on the floor out of reach, kneeling next to her.

“Well, if it isn’t the cutest knight of all!” He says, bopping Klee’s nose. Her shoulders relax, then, a tentative smile taking over her lips, but he can tell Diluc makes her uneasy— probably because he’s not any fun, most of the time. “So, are you ready to spend the day *not* getting in trouble with your favorite brother, Klee?”

Klee shifts nervously, but her smile widens; this is a line of discussion they’ve had often. “Klee never said anything about favorites!”

“Hey, what Albedo doesn’t know can’t hurt him, right?” He shoots back, making her giggle, and without much preamble, Kaeya raises her into his arms, Klee’s childish laughter when he playfully jostles her warming his heart. But Diluc’s presence lingers, and his smile becomes a little cold when he turns his head towards him, meeting an odd, longing look in his gaze,

eyes shifting between him and Klee. Food for thought. “Let’s say good-bye to Master Diluc, then, shall we? We’re going to be *very busy*, after all.”

“Uh, alright then!” Klee glances at Diluc, nervously waving a hand at him. “Goodbye, Master Diluc. Klee hopes you have a great day!”

Jean’s courtesy classes are finally starting to bear fruit, apparently. “Likewise, Master Diluc. I’ll notify you in case we can continue our meeting tonight.”

A pause. “I’ll be waiting, then.”

Diluc stares at Kaeya for a little too long to be casual, but ultimately, he gives Klee his regards, and leaves his office without looking back.

Diluc sits on it. And waits.

And waits. And waits. And then waits some more. It was probably too much to ask, considering the sharpness of Kaeya’s eye when he left, as cool as the icicles he produces, that he would find it in himself to look for Diluc before sunset. Not that he didn’t have his own schedule to see to, but the point of showing up at the Ordo Favonius headquarters and storming his office before the sun fully rose in the city had been to get rid of the heaviness in his chest, sitting right behind his heart. Not make it worse.

You’ve done it again, his brain supplies, as his own careless words replay in his memory, *you pushed him away again and now he’s done it in return*.

Diluc has always been aware that his temper isn’t the best; too much passion used to be a compliment when he was younger, but now, it just makes his business partners sour on the face when he refuses deals that could end up helping Snezhnaya or the Fatui, and shows him how having words that strive to hurt isn’t always the best. Kaeya’s carefully constructed prose offends in such a way that you aren’t sure you’re being insulted, while Diluc’s fire-spitting speech sometimes leaves much to be desired in terms of fake courtesy, even if it has rarely backfired as badly as today. It’s why silence, questioning, and vigilantism are his preferred methods.

He's still one of the best players on the board when it comes to protecting Mondstadt, but his inherent violence seems to do more harm than good when he isn't careful with himself. It's no wonder that every time Kaeya ropes him into his schemes, it is to inflict pain.

He feels ashamed of his doubts towards Kaeya. He can't trust him, no, but they've relearned each other in a manner that only requires a vote of confidence, which is all they can deal with right now in order to have this not blow up on their faces again. Diluc wants to trust him again, someday, but today he has actively worked against his own desires by doubting him instead of meeting him in the middle, like he's been doing.

"Master Diluc," Adeline calls, snapping Diluc from his thoughts. He blinks at his desk, where he finished going over proposals for Ludi Harpastum an hour ago and never tidied up, before looking up to meet her nervous gaze. She has a hand wrapped around a wrist, toying with a bracelet that Diluc recalls a younger Kaeya gifting her. Diluc has even been cruel to his staff. "Sir Kaeya is at the door, and wishes to speak with you. Shall I guide him in?"

Adeline looks uncomfortable asking, and Diluc wonders what kind of thoughts run through her head, what her opinion is, whether she's thinking that Kaeya shouldn't need to act like a stranger every time he comes around until they leave the two of them alone. He wonders if Elzer would share that perspective.

"Welcome him in, Adeline," Diluc nods, leaning back against his chair and rubbing his fingers together, the fabric of his gloves wrinkling. "Do be so kind as to boil some tea for us, as well, please. The most calming brew in the house would be preferable."

"Right away, Master Diluc." She leaves, hardly producing a sound, allowing the door to remain open. Diluc closes his eyes and listens to her footsteps as she goes back down the stairs, all the way to the door. She and Kaeya exchange kind words before they part, Adeline to the kitchen, Kaeya up to the way she came.

He stops at the doorway, and knocks on the doorframe. Diluc opens his eyes, and meets Kaeya out of uniform, and out of suits. Just him, in slacks that would make his father proud, a loose button-up with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows that matches the color of his exposed eye, accessories gone but for his earring, no coat despite the chill that clings to Mondstadt still.

“May I?” He asks, his voice soft like the silk of Diluc’s bed sheets, and there’s something about it tonight that makes Diluc’s more vulnerable feelings rise to his chest, that bring emotion to his throat. He can barely find it in himself to nod, and Kaeya steps forwards, closes the door behind him so Adeline will know to knock.

“Sir Kaeya,” Diluc starts, but it is as far as he gets, watching the other half of his soul sit across from him, on one of the chairs that is usually occupied by greedy money grabbers with a fondness for wine, or his own staff. He can’t even bring himself to make the usually obligatory remark about the time of night that’s more routine than actual annoyance, and thankfully, Kaeya seems to notice his failure to communicate, taking over for him.

“No titles tonight,” he smiles, but it’s thin, forced. He’s more guarded than he’s been in months, at least in front of Diluc. “It is finally that peculiar time of the year in which I allow myself a day or two of rest, outside of the Ordo.”

Diluc licks his lips, hands sweating. “So you aren’t working.”

“I should be done after this,” and Kaeya gestures with a hand, between the two of them. Diluc doesn’t know how to feel about the implication that *they* are part of the work Kaeya does in the background, but he knows, from the stiffness of his shoulders, that he’s just trying not to be mad and bitter. Diluc’s just getting a taste of his own medicine as a result. “Afterwards, I’m going back to my place. I’ve barely set foot on it in weeks, and a good clean is due.”

Diluc takes the words for what they are: Kaeya isn’t sharing his bed tonight. The thought is sobering, makes his heart beat harder in his chest. An awful feeling that the situation is slipping from his hands, that *Kaeya* is slipping from him, behind a wall of ice that might last days or months or years,

settles over like a nightmare, and he finds himself speaking in a hushed, desperate voice.

“I’m sorry,” he says, and the way Kaeya flinches, eye widening like that’s the last thing he has ever expected him to say, digs into his skin like a knife. “You know that I get— I get in over my head. I can keep to myself the right to trust you or not, but that doesn’t mean I should doubt your every move when we’re starving for information.”

“Master Diluc,” Kaeya’s eyebrows rise and fall; shock fading into caution. He hates it more than he has ever hated the man himself. “I wasn’t aware you learned some self-awareness on the road.”

That hurts, Diluc thinks, barely keeps himself from wincing. Of course it does; Kaeya’s always been good at pushing his buttons whether he liked it or not, back when he was a foreign boy with a grin far too sharp, when he was a teenager with his hand on Diluc’s shoulder, when he stood under the rain and revealed his truth, and now. Now, a man heavy with the burden of sins that aren’t really his, cursed from the moment of his birth yet still gods-blessed, ready to uproot issues rather than cut them at the source, leaving nothing behind.

Always cold, always hurtful if he has to be, rarely cruel, except for these moments of helpless honesty. Only ever soft under the veil of nighttime, bed sheets, the knowledge that they’re alone. As impenetrable as Dragonspine, ever since Diluc chewed him and spit him out four years ago, like some sort of bad drug.

He swallows.

“I have to learn, at some point,” Diluc mumbles, and doesn’t bother to hide a sigh, to not press his fingers against his eyes and scrub, as if that could take away his regrets and his guilt and his hurt, as well as the hurt he’s caused Kaeya. “I don’t actually wish for a repeat of the last four years.”

“Of the silence between us, you mean,” Kaeya pulls that from his words like it’s nothing, and Diluc would like to say that it’s because they know

each other so well, but this is purely his skill. You can't tell half-truths to a liar, unless you're ready to be called out. "Self-imposed, if I recall."

"Yes," Diluc admits. He apologized for it, of course, for a lot of things, Kaeya did too, but sometimes it's this raw, and those don't feel like they were nearly enough. "I won't say I don't deserve this punishment, Kae, if only for a day, but I want you to know I'm sorry."

Kaeya stares at him with a stoic expression that must be practiced in the same way Lisa's lazy eyes are; his face is slack and his eyebrows seem to rest at ease, but then his mouth curls, a light flashes in his eye, and he's sighing like he doesn't know exactly what to make of this, which would be close to a first.

"Alright," Kaeya concedes, finally, but there's an air of disappointment between the two of them, a mutual acknowledgement of how hard this still is. Communication. Agreeing to disagree. Knowing that sometimes they need time apart before sticking to each other once more, like the two pieces of a heart they are. "Alright, then, Luc. Shall we proceed?"

Diluc sighs, his chest feeling lighter. "Go ahead."

"Lover's spat?" Lisa asks, in that casual way of hers that sometimes makes Kaeya want to strangle her. Kaeya shoots her a raised eyebrow, and she nods towards the festivities, and most importantly, Angel's Share. "My, Jean truly gave you the best guard post, didn't she?"

Ludi Harpastum is in full swing by now, people dancing the night away all across Mondstadt, the winner of the Harpastum, Aether, struggling under the weight of all the congratulations coming his way. Diluc set up a bar outside Angel's Share, while Charles worked inside for maximum efficiency, and Kaeya had been able to ignore his presence while on his spot up until Lisa arrived.

"I knew this was your idea," he grumbles, which isn't proper of him, but it's been two weeks since he's had Dawn Winery product, instead drinking his woes away at Cat's Tail. He's slowly losing his sanity from Dil— from

Death After Noon withdrawal, of course. It's about time he deals with it. "Like Master Ragnvindr needs help guarding his area..."

Lisa chuckles, and pushes a drink into his hand, her fingers wrapping around his bicep. "How about a dance and a drink, then? Not necessarily in that order."

Kaeya stares at her, then at his drink, then at the dress she put on that's *clearly* meant to impress, and smirks. "Ah, Lisa, are you perhaps making an indecent proposal right now? Am I not the only one with a beaten heart?"

"Please, as if you could handle me," she says, but the slight wrinkling of her eyebrows gives her away. Jean must be accidentally neglecting her again, despite Kaeya's efforts to lower her workload. "Let's just have fun, shall we? One song is all I ask."

Lisa is usually too lazy to dance, which is a real shame, because she's wicked great at it, at least when her dancing partner is not some slobbering idiot. Kaeya prides himself in being a good dancer as well, since he enjoys the way music is carried by the wind in Mondstadt, no doubt Barbatos' doing, filling him with a sense of peace. It had made him feel lively for the first time in his life, when he first heard a bard during a party organized by Master Crepus, shortly after he took him in. There's music in Khaenri'ah, of course, but it all carries the weight of centuries of sorrow. The music of Mondstadt couldn't be more different.

It's only natural, then, that the people that have been around for the last three or four Ludi Harpastums and that know very well who they are, start a round of whistling and catcalling as he and Lisa take the floor, the musicians stopping in the middle of a song to start another, one that is *usually* reserved for couples, due to its intimacy.

"Oh, dear," Lisa whispers, but she's smiling, and Kaeya can't help but meet her eye with a smirk, raising an eyebrow as they take their positions, bodies flushed together, waiting for the cue, other couples joining them. "Master Ragnvindr might just glare me out of existence. I can feel it already."

“Jean is going to be so mad,” Kaeya retorts, they laugh, and lose themselves in the song.

This is what Kaeya likes about Lisa; she doesn’t care much for appropriate, unless it comes to her craft and even then, she likes to push limits. A brilliant witch, truly, and one that has no issue indulging in the petty act of dancing to forget. It has become a tradition between them, every Ludi Harpastum, that they lead the party into its highest point of the night, switching dance partners and holding drinks like lifelines until they find each other again, and Kaeya dips her when the music's over, after what feels like hours of it, chests heaving and covered in sweat.

People around them keep at it, of course, the insatiable city that Mondstadt is. But they straighten, break apart, their eyes meet, amusement in the air between them as a flash of red hair storms inside Angel’s Share.

“You’re mean to him,” Lisa says, and oh, if that isn’t funny. “Though, I suppose he must be meaner, to have you off his back for this long.”

In truth, Kaeya feels as if he’s actually lost an eye, or a limb. Distance hurts. “It’s complicated.”

Lisa sighs, fanning herself with a hand. “Isn’t it always? But it’s the first time he’s seen your new dance partner.”

“Ah, as if he ever allowed me to lead him in public like this,” Kaeya winks, and Lisa snorts, slapping his arm. Diluc used to dance with him, before he left, even if it was usually just one song because he has two left feet. It was quite different from dancing with Lisa—it was better. “Stop fishing for gossip, Lisa. I’ll talk to him, and you’ll go see your girlfriend. I’m sure she’s working herself to the bone, and already going green with the rumors of our little dance.”

“I’ll bring her out,” Lisa says, with the determination she usually reserves for a well-filed book. If he were Jean, he’d be terrified. “Goodnight and good luck, then, Sir Kaeya. Don’t let the wine lord bite you.”

Lisa walks off, ignoring the gazes of people following after her stunning visage. A familiar pain that the dance temporarily masked settles over him again, carrying Diluc's name, one he was already used to but seems to have been amplified by the knowledge that he's just out of reach, this time. He finally feels ready to remedy it.

Kaeya walks into Angel's Share, follows Charles' pointed gaze to the second floor terrace, and leans beside Diluc on the balcony, watching him as he gazes at the people celebrating in the streets, his expression dry, on the edge of a real frown. At the sight of his red hair ruffled by the breeze, his half-lidded eyes, a breath escapes him – too heavy, too longing – and the pain dies until it's just that other one, softer. The pain of loving him, and missing him.

Diluc doesn't look back at Kaeya, but he doesn't need to. Kaeya could stare at him for eternity, and it still wouldn't matter if he never looked back, as long as he remained in sight. "I already said I'm sorry. If you need me to say it again, I will."

"I'm not trying to punish you," Kaeya admits, because it's been a couple long, arduous weeks, and perhaps some things need to be clarified. Diluc looks as miserable as Kaeya felt just a few minutes ago, from what he can see of his profile. "I thought we could use some distance, Diluc."

"What for?" Diluc is trying not to sound bothered, but his posture says it all, judging by the defensive edge of his shoulders, hunched onto himself. Kaeya's heart squeezes in his chest. "So I could feel how you felt when I left?"

Kaeya stares at his stoic features and reaches over with a hand, a tiny smile, private and personal, curling his lips when Diluc leans into it without flinching, casting those red eyes over him like a spell. So dark, so heavy, so sad, with the taste of regret and being wrong, for once.

"Don't put words in my mouth," Kaeya pauses, his thumb brushing Diluc's lips. "I'll admit I'm as bitter as you can be, *beloved*, but I bleed just the same with it. I could never leave you, even if I forgot you. Not willingly, not if I

was allowed to be selfish. I don't want you to throw your heart out like I had to in order to survive it."

Diluc's eyes flutter, and he mouths the Khaenri'ahn word – the pet-name – under his breath, as if committing the feeling of it to memory. "What is it, then? Why the distance?"

"I don't know if I've told you this," Kaeya starts, dropping his hand, looking below at the drunks and the dancers and the musicians, at Aether being roped into a dance by Amber, Paimon filling her belly. "But one never escapes Khaenri'ah, I don't think. Everything I do, everything I say, is under the assumption that one day I'll be dragged back, and I don't want to drag the free souls of Mondstadt with me. Working *with* someone... I've always avoided it."

Diluc's words shake, his voice strained. "But you were always behind me."

Kaeya turns his head towards him, smiling. "Of course. I'm afraid I owe you my own apologies, Diluc, since I've left you in the dark again."

"What do you mean?" A weary look, but not untrustworthy, not critical, which is better than the alternative.

"The truth is, you overwhelm me. You make me dream of impossible things. Make me want them, as if we sinners have the right to that." Kaeya nods towards the city around them, the friends below them. "Adjusting to this is not easy. I've always pretended I'm above it, but I'm not. So when I'm reminded of Khaenri'ah, I'm reminded that I'm supposed to be alone, only to remember you... and remember how much I want you to trust me again."

"You wanted to regroup," Diluc sums it up, but the look in his eye— they're wet, his face is flushed. Kaeya doesn't resist the urge to wrap an arm around his shoulders, bring him in, Diluc's face hiding in Kaeya's neck, both of them uncaring of the people below. "I hurt you so much, and you didn't want to hurt me back because *you* trust *me*."

Kaeya chuckles, kisses the top of Diluc's head. "Now, don't make a big deal out of it. Distance can also hurt, and I was... not in my best behavior, when

we last spoke."

Diluc laughs, a little wet. "What, that? I needed to hear that. I keep forgetting you're not the villain I wanted to make out of you years ago."

"You flatter me," Kaeya mumbles, and pushes Diluc back to meet his eyes. They stare, then, a moment frozen in eternity, until the gravitational pull is too much and their lips are about to touch—

Someone beneath them screams bloody murder, startling both into jumping away from each other, lest the citizens of Mondstadt catch Master Crepus' sons making out on a balcony, but it's just the party growing wilder with Venti's arrival, testing the musicians' knowledge of old wives tales.

"Seven above," Diluc shakes his head. "I'm going to have to serve him some wine tonight, aren't I?"

Kaeya laughs, bringing Diluc back into his arms for just a few more glorious seconds. "Let's head back inside, then."

They end up at the bar, watching Charles work, Diluc's puffy eyes almost unnoticeable. Their elbows brush, and Diluc's so obviously in good spirits now that Kaeya wants to tease him about it but doesn't. Another employee has taken over the bar outside, so Diluc is under his right to relax, not worry about serving Barbatos, and Kaeya isn't going to ruin that for him after putting him through a rough time, no matter if it was equally as hard for him. This moment, under the lights of the tavern, everyone too distracted by the festivities to notice them together, is for them both.

Diluc shifts in his seat, and again, too obvious, his stool moves towards his own, until their arms are all but pressed together. He turns towards Charles. "A bottle of Death After Noon, when you can. Of the finest."

Kaeya snorts once Charles is done eyeing the two of them with suspicion, clearly not blind to what's actually between them, shooting Diluc a look. "Spoiling me now, aren't you?"

“I feel like having a drink, is all,” Diluc says, mouth twitching with the lie, and Kaeya’s heart swells, his laugh comes easy. He seems to be back to his own self, and Kaeya loves him so, so much. “Don’t let it get to your head, being seen with you is already enough of a test for my reputation.”

“*Please*, you wound me,” Kaeya shakes his head, and smiles a little too wide at Charles when he comes back with their bottle and two glasses, one of which is already halfway filled with water, because poor Master Diluc is a lightweight. Without missing a beat, Kaeya pours himself a drink in the empty glass, and only allows two fingers of Death After Noon to fall into Diluc’s, using his fingers to mix it. This is probably already more than he can probably handle. “You better indulge me, at least, Master Diluc. How about a toast?”

But Diluc surprises him by taking Kaeya’s wrist in his hand, pulling until his fingers, wet with his drink, meet his mouth. Shamelessly, uncaring of all the patrons of Angel’s Share possibly catching them and giving them a no doubt scandalized look, Diluc opens up and sucks. A flare of heat runs over his body as they make eye contact, Diluc’s lips wrapped around his fingertips and his tongue licking at them, and they stand frozen in time up until Charles quite obnoxiously clears his throat in warning.

“I see,” Kaeya says afterwards, taking a long, long gulp of his drink, and eyeing the bottle. “Well, if that’s how we’re feeling, Master Diluc...”

Diluc says nothing, but the way he downs his glass until its empty is better than any words could be. Suddenly, Kaeya wishes the bar were empty; it was always a dream of his to fuck Diluc over the counter...

“Sir Kaeya,” Diluc calls, and he already looks like he might regret it, but he reaches for the bottle, and Kaeya pours more water – Charles is a wonder – into his glass before he can get too ahead. “Eyes on me only, tonight. No dancing with strangers or witches.”

Kaeya smirks, ignores his cock getting interested at the memory that flashes through his mind, of how easily fucked out and needy Diluc gets when drunk.

“Already on it, Master Diluc.”

Diluc isn't sure how they make it back upstairs. In fact, he isn't sure how they didn't end up making out in front of all of the clientele to see, but it might have had something to do with Kaeya being able to control Diluc's greedy hands from getting too obviously shameless. He can't help it; two weeks of not knowing where they stand, exactly, has left him emotionally drained, and all he wants is *him*, everywhere, as soon as possible.

He hasn't been drunk in years, probably ever since Kaeya's birthday the year before everything went to shit, and the wine, that already hits him hard, hits him like fucking Ruin Guardian falling on him would, this time, but he doesn't regret the liquid courage.

As such, he's the one that makes eyes at Kaeya all night, that keeps trying to cut the space between them, and that almost manages to steal kisses right where anyone could see. He's the one whining under his breath, each time Kaeya took his hands off him at the bar, and the one that's had a chub in his pants for over an hour.

The bar hasn't even been filled out yet; there must still be an hour or two before closing, and even longer before Ludi Harpastum veterans call it a night, but it is the last thing in Diluc's mind as Kaeya slams him against the closed door of the break room Diluc keeps for emergencies – or vigilante escapades, more like – once they're inside, completely forgoing the bed.

To his dismay, lips cling to his neck rather than his mouth, pulling a frustrated sound from his lips, his hands tangling in Kaeya's hair as he bares his neck further. He *wants him*.

“Kiss me,” he begs, because there's hardly any other way to describe it, his voice a shadow of what it usually is. Kaeya takes a second to take off his eye-patch, runs his full gaze over Diluc. And it is so hungry, so possessive in how Kaeya's hands on his waist tighten, that Diluc knows he's been ruined by him ages ago; he'll never be able to like someone else's hands on him like he *needs* Kaeya's. “Stop staring and *kiss me*, you fool—”

“Didn’t you tell me to keep my eyes on you?” Kaeya moves his hands to start removing Diluc’s layers, almost ripping fabric and buttons off his clothes until a pile consisting of his jacket, gloves, and vest sits on the floor. Kaeya glares at his belts. “I should just pull down your pants and be done with it.”

Diluc shivers, pulling at Kaeya’s hair. “Do it.”

It’s a challenge, and a reckless one at that, since it’s not like they’ve been fucking every day, especially after this week—but Kaeya pauses, pulls something from the inside of his shirt, and sets a vial of oil in Diluc’s clumsy hands. Of course.

“Always prepared,” Kaeya smirks, and finally, their lips meet. Diluc’s whole body arches into it like it’s his first breath of air, hand almost dropping the oil to the floor as he wraps his arms around Kaeya’s neck, back bowing to press his chest against Kaeya’s, legs parting to let him in between.

It’s dirty and tastes like Death After Noon, as Kaeya’s tongue proves to still be far more skilled than his own, pulling him undone, until he can’t breathe and saliva connects their mouths together. Kaeya licks over his lips, then, in a mockup of cleaning him up, and then bites at his jaw, down his neck, his collarbone—it *hurts*, but he needs it to, wants the marks and the pain and the reminder, as much as Kaeya wants his mark to linger on his skin.

He reciprocates, after all, pushing Kaeya’s coat off his shoulders, digging fingers and nails into whatever skin of his partly-uncovered chest he can reach. They hold each other not unlike animals, any pretense of elegance and nuance forgotten, as the strain of their time apart disappears and leaves nothing but the desire, the need for reassurance from each other's touch.

His lips are assaulted again, and this time Kaeya bites there, as well, draws blood. It seems to be the breaking point for the both of them, since a second of eye contact is all they need before Diluc is willingly turning around, bracing himself against the door, and Kaeya does as told—pulls down his pants until Diluc’s ass is bare, his skin – his body, his soul, his heart – free for him to do as he pleases.

Kaeya stretches him open how he likes it: quick, rough, and reaching so deep inside him that Diluc forgets himself and has to have a hand clamped over his mouth to keep him quiet. It's not the most efficient way to loosen him, but it's on the edge of *enough*; Kaeya makes up for it by emptying the leftover oil on his cock before he starts pushing inside him, and it is then that he starts pushing back, feeling the head breach him until he's swallowed it and clenching, whimpering for more.

"*Diluc*," Kaeya warns him, but does very little to stop him, other than staying still, letting him get his fill. And he does, one of his hands reaching back to pull Kaeya's body into his, grabbing him by the edge of his shirt, moans muffled by Kaeya's hand. "You like that, don't you?"

Diluc feels his ass clenching around him again, his breath coming out in a soft, shivery pant, as he nods his agreement. Kaeya's cock pushes deeper into him, indulging him, and he really, really should've made him, *let him* stretch him further, but the slight burn of it makes his toes curl up, a long cry ripped from his lips.

"Say, Diluc," Kaeya pauses, letting the suspense of his words build until a chuckle breaks through, his hand falling away from Diluc's mouth and letting his pants and moans be heard. "Does it turn you on, knowing there's at least two dozen people downstairs that might have a chance to hear you split yourself on your younger brother's cock?"

Oh, gods.

"You're shameless." Diluc feels his face warming, so, so much. This is a running joke that Kaeya finds amusing, but it just makes him embarrassed to think that Mondstadt has always been blind to the true nature of their affection. He hated it when he was younger, hates it now, but his hips push backwards anyways, trying to get more of Kaeya inside. It *might* turn him on a little, but he's not drunk enough to admit that, thanks to Kaeya controlling his intake. "Ah, *ah*, fuck, since when are you this big, gods..."

"You have a lot of gall to call me shameless when you're this much of a whore for it."

Kaeya nails the words home by thrusting out, then in, not pushing in any deeper, and Diluc arches his back, presses his cheek against the door, muffles of voices entering his ear, barely breathing through his mouth. He has no answer, other than to pull at Kaeya's hair, urging him on, whine leaving his lips.

"You're gonna work for it, then?" Kaeya rolls his hips, and Diluc feels it overwhelming his emotions, his eyes going blurry with rapidly forming tears. It's so, so good. "Your hole seems eager for it, dear brother. Remember when we had the manor to ourselves, on that odd occasion our days off aligned, and you couldn't walk without my cum dripping out? The maids never even noticed."

Dear seven, Diluc thinks, a thrill going down his spine. Oh, does he *remember*. "Shut up, I need you, this is so wrong right now."

"From where I'm standing," Kaeya laughs, and finally, *finally* pushes in full, so fast that Diluc tenses up, nearly comes on the spot. "This couldn't look more right."

"Yes!" Diluc blurts out, clenching down, closing his eyes. A hand not his own touches his stomach, pushing down on his lower belly, and he *feels it—fuck*. "Oh, yes, yes, *please—!*"

"Be a little louder, I don't think the city's heard you," Kaeya breathes out, panting against his ear as he pulls out and thrusts in again, then again, once more, and Diluc starts shivering, biting his lip until it starts bleeding again. "Ah, you're gonna be done already? That's not fair, Diluc, I'm barely even getting started..."

What are words? Diluc's forgotten; all he's capable of doing is lolling his head back against Kaeya's shoulders, trembling harder at the lips that immediately meet his neck. He's distantly aware that they're making quite a ruckus, what with the door creaking under their weight, the slap of skin against skin, and his unrestrained moaning. It seems Kaeya has no intention of shutting him up, which is just fine; Diluc's mind is too busy happily swimming with Death After Noon and the feeling of being stuffed with cock to care. If someone wants to look young Master Ragnvindr in the eye

and ask him whether his brother was fucking him just now, then that's just fine by him, he'll pay his respects to that person. With his claymore.

Drool starts trickling out of the corner of his mouth, and Kaeya licks it off with a joyous laugh. "Alright, Diluc, I guess that's enough foreplay."

He blinks. "*Huh?*"

And then Kaeya sets a hand under his knee, rises it up, keeps it in the air against the door, and fucks him deeper. Diluc chokes, then, scrambles as the thrusts become rougher, until Kaeya's chest is the only thing holding him upwards on his remaining foot, and his voice rises in volume.

"Ah, ah, ah, ah, *fuck, fuck, uh—!*"

"I'm gonna fill you up," Kaeya grunts out, and Diluc clenches, going cross-eyed when it results in a deep, slower thrust that rubs beautifully against his prostate, his whole body tensing up and pressure coming to a head as Kaeya continues to speak. "We're going to go back downstairs, after I dress you up, and you'll be dripping down your thighs, just like old times. I'll even help you burn these pants after we get home."

Home, the word echoes in Diluc's brain and that soft part of him, of his heart, that keeps bleeding for Kaeya, that *never* stopped bleeding for Kaeya even then he thought he hated him, seems to cry out, his lowered defenses making it so easy for it to slip underneath his skin. He cums at the same time that a sob breaks from his lungs, tears gathering up in his eyes and spilling down his cheeks, as shivers run up and down his spine and he clenches on Kaeya, helpless to the onslaught of feeling.

A curse is whispered in his ear, then, and he's pressed even further against the door, until it's rubbing uncomfortably against his cheek as Kaeya fucks into him, taking him past the point of afterglows and aftershocks into the undeniable feeling of being used; if he weren't this drunk, Diluc would be asking for him to go even harder, use him up without regards, but Kaeya is filling him up before the thought can even finish processing.

Lips press against his ear, and Kaeya lets his leg drop to the floor, Diluc's body going completely boneless in such a way that Kaeya's forced to wrap his arms around his waist. His voice is velvet. "An appropriate warm-up for you, Master Diluc?"

A laugh, low and dry, escapes his lips. "I can't trust yet, but I love you."

There's just a hint of bitterness to it, of pain, but Kaeya doesn't freeze, like his Vision would indicate. No, he sighs, hugs Diluc closer, nuzzles the back of his neck.

"You're so drunk," he mumbles, a deflection if Diluc's ever seen one. "Don't say pretty things just to make me feel better about my life expectations, Diluc."

"You think I'm lying?" Diluc asks, without anger, without hurt, recognizing the tired edge of his tone, and Kaeya shakes his head. Diluc knows he has Kaeya's trust, and he isn't going to betray that. "I love you. I'm not saying it a third time, Kae, that's more pain than we both deserve to carry."

There's a deep sigh.

"I love you," Kaeya says against his neck, sending shivers down his body. He pulls out his cock, then, and Diluc becomes aware of how much he's aching, already, how sore he's going to be after they're done. If they're ever done, that is; he wouldn't mind never leaving his bedroom if he gets to keep Kaeya for himself for the rest of Ludi Harpastum. "I love you. It'll kill me, but I love you."

Diluc swallows as Kaeya adjusts his pants, not bothering to wipe him. He can't move yet, not really. "The third, Kae."

Kaeya laughs. "*You* deserve it. All of it, it has always been yours. I'll have to cry a frozen river before earning mine."

"Love isn't earned," Diluc whispers. "It's freely given, and then we burden the pain of it."

Silence, at that, except for Kaeya dressing him up; he turns Diluc around, fixes his belts, buttons his vest, straightens his coat, and holds out his hands for him to slip the gloves on as he leans against the door for support. The front of his pants is wet, but it's nothing noticeable and could very well be excused away with a spilled drink. His hair isn't touched, because there's no saving that even on a good day without a brush, and when Kaeya tugs on his coat and fixes his own hair by running his fingers through it, pants already done, it looks like nothing ever happened.

That is, if one ignores the door scratches on Diluc's cheek, his busted lip, the teeth marks over his neck and jaw, and the scent of sex that clings to their bodies. Kaeya regards him with a critical eye, eye-patch back on, probably already having his excuse ready if someone dares ask.

Their gaze meets, and Kaeya smiles, soft and real, like he doesn't for anyone else. It took Diluc quite a while to notice that. "When Khaenri'ah takes me—"

Diluc's heart throbs with fear. "Kaeya—"

"When they *do*, I'll remember what you just said." He pauses, leaning in to kiss him, chaste and thoughtful. "And I'll burden your love instead of just my own, until I feel like I deserve it."

"You're so dramatic," Diluc tries to stand up right, but there's no point. Kaeya will have to walk him out of Angel's Share tonight. "Don't *jinx* it, you bastard, or I'll kill you myself."

Kaeya's eye twinkles. "So I'm hoping."

"You're so beautiful." Kaeya pushes in and out, in and out, looks at Diluc's flushed face. He's so loose, it's wonderful, but his body keeps shaking, as he hovers between sleep and awareness. "So, so beautiful. Fucking *gorgeous*."

Dawn slowly peeks through the window, spilling over pale, freckled skin. Diluc cums on his cock only, again, body trembling and barely a few drops of cum gathering over his belly. Then Kaeya's pulling out, jerking himself

the rest of the way off. It falls on Diluc's naked chest, and that seems to wake him better than his own orgasm.

"Good morning," Diluc mumbles, blinking his eyes open. "While I slept...?"

"You passed out, actually." Kaeya leans over him, trailing his fingers over skin, pressing a kiss over his forehead. "We haven't gone to bed yet, in true spirit of two Ludi Harpastum drunks."

"Ugh," Diluc shifts, moans in pleasure when Kaeya's fingers find his hole, then groans in frustration, bringing a hand up to his temple, pushing at his shoulder to make him stop with the other one. "Headache..."

"Shall I fuck your hangover out, or are you too sore? You're so loose, gods, I would've knocked you up by now if you had a womb." Kaeya pauses, taking his eyes from Diluc's abused nipples back to his face, just to see that pretty blush, that embarrassed expression, as he breaks eye contact. "Too much, brother? Or perhaps too little?"

Diluc makes a sound like he wants to strangle him, but is clearly too tired to do so. "...get out and get to work, Sir Kaeya. You left your guard post last night."

"You're no *fun*—"

"And if anyone asks, I'm undisposed. For the rest of the week, and Ludi Harpastum, at that. You're to return as soon as possible."

Kaeya laughs so hard that he's sure he gives the birds outside a heart attack, and then kisses Diluc until a threat to throw him off the bed is made.

He missed home.

Author's Note:

thanks for reading!